

F A I T H *John Spelman*

DISTINGUISHED

F R O M

Opinion *and* Science.

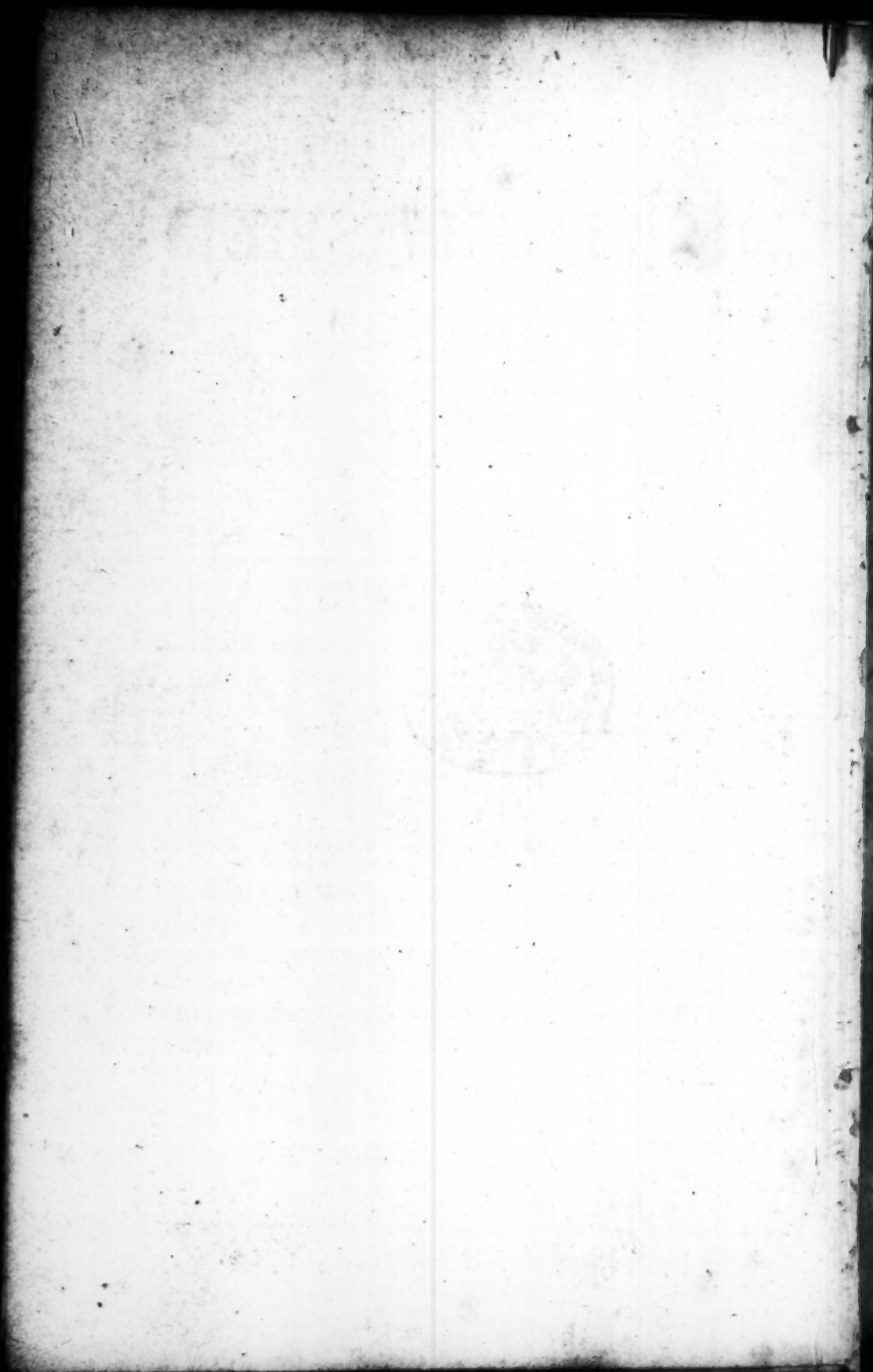
In some REMARKS upon a Book lately
Publish'd, By the Lord Bishop of Rapho,
ENTITLED

A Plain and Easy Method, whereby a Man
of a Moderate Capacity may Arrive at
full Satisfaction in all Things that con-
cern his Everlasting Salvation.

Not shutting my Ears against any thing that
is offered by Others, WHOEVER they are;
nor in the least endeavouring to bring my self
to Assent to, or Dissent from any thing, because
THIS or THAT Man has said it.

Bp. of Rapho's Plain and Easy Method, p. 24.

Printed for the Booksellers, 1716.





REMARKS

Upon some *PARAGRAPHS* in a Book,

ENTITLED

A Plain and Easy Method, &c.

IHAD Thoughts of Considering at *Length*, this Treatise of the Lord Bishop of *Rapho's*, *A PLAIN Method*, for a *MODERATE Capacity*, to *ARRIVE* at *FULL Satisfaction*, in *ALL Things* that concern his Everlasting *SALVATION*, *i. e.* without any Dependance upon the *Authority* of the Church, or Regard to *Articles* of Religion; *Liturgies*, *Rites*, or *Ceremonies*; *Opinions* of Fathers or *Casuits*; Nay, and without any steadfast Belief, or firm unshaken Assent, even to what we *Commonly* call *Articles* of Faith : But by sticking close to his *Own Reason* and *Scripture*; And, to the *Immediate* Commands of God Himself. This is the main Tendency of that whole Tract, as any one may find, who will be

at the trouble of looking through that Obscure, and abstracted Manner in which it is Wrote. I had Thoughts, I say, of Considering it at length; but finding this would swell to too great a *Bulk*, I have, for my own and the Reader's Ease, Contracted that Design into a few *Remarks* upon some of the most Material *Paragraphs*.

I do not in the least presume, through these Remarks, to Guess what his Lordship's *Design* or *Intention* was in Writing that Book; but leave that to remain a Secret between God and his own Conscience, 'till he is pleased to Publish it to the World. Only I must Observe, that let the *Design* be ever so Good, it is here pursued by *Evil* means; that is, by laying down such *Positions*, and establishing such *Principles*, as the Reader will find, do surprizingly strike at the Root and Foundation of all Revealed Religion; and tend to the dissolving the whole Frame and Constitution of any Visible Church upon Earth.

Par. IV. If any one shall tell me, that it is not enough for me to keep God's COMMANDMENTS; [the Great Principle his Lordship pursues in all Things he publisheth,] but that in order to my Salvation it is necessary also, that I believe those Doctrinal Truths, which he has made known unto us; or Those, at the least, which we Commonly call Articles of Faith; [Yes truly, this is a grand Objection

ction against his Fundamental Principle, and it is what every good Christian would tell him] *I Answer, That whatever God hath COMMANDED me to Believe, I am certainly bound to believe accordingly; and if I do not so believe, [when I am so Commanded] I am justly to be punished with Eternal Damnation. But if a Doctrine be in itself NEVER so True, yet if God has no way laid any Command upon me to believe it, in this Case, not to believe is no Sin, for where no Law (or in other Terms, no Command) is, there is no Transgression; that is to say, no Sin, Rom. 14. 15. nor, consequently, can this my WANT of Belief be any BAR or Obstruction to my Salvation.*

But, surely if a Christian Doctrine is undoubtedly True, *i. e. made known unto us by God Himself*, doth not the very Truth of the Revelation carry in it the force of a Divine Command? This Paragraph doth so fully, and without any reserve, all at once, destroy every Point of Revelation, for the believing of which, there is not beside that Revelation a particular Command for the believing of it; that I know not what to say more, than to express my Astonishment, that his Lordship should not only maintain this Doctrine here, but repeat and pursue it yet farther in *Par. 48.* where, having mentioned the unnecessary Controversies in the Christian World, he *Wishes it were seriously laid to Heart, that very often the Dispute is not, What hath God Commanded us to Believe and Do? (which yet*

yet is all that is Necessary to Salvation,) but only, is this particular Doctrine True, or not? In the name of Christianity, what then becomes of all the Particulars of Faith, contained in the Apostles Creed? The believing of which was hitherto ever thought Necessary to the Salvation of Christians? And, for no other Reason, but because in his Lordship's own Words, they are *Doctrinal Truths, made known unto us* by God in the Scriptures? And therefore they are called by that name of *Veneration* and *Distinction*, *Articles* of Faith. The sum of the Answer here plainly Imply'd is, That 'tis true they are * **Commonly** called Articles of Faith; and upon that very mistaken Notion of the Necessity of believing of Them in order to Salvation : But, 'tis a vulgar Error, which hath prevailed for want of Considering, that let them be *Ever so True*, and ever so plainly Revealed; yet, if there is not besides that *Revelation* a plain Command to believe Them, 'tis no Sin to disbelieve Them, *i. e.* to believe Them all to be **False**. And accordingly his Lordship Affirms, *It is not in the Power of any Church Universal or Particular, to require our Assent to Them, as Necessary to Salvation.* †

* Observe in this Treatise, where you meet with mention of our Articles of Faith, **Commonly** called so is added; which plainly Insinuates the **Common** Mistake of the Necessity of believing Them.

† See this to the full *Par. 43.*

Par. XXII. *If at any time I have sufficient EVIDENCE or Proof of the Truth of a Doctrine or Proposition, it is not in my POWER to withhold my ASSENT from it; and if I want such Proof or Evidence, as to me appears to be sufficient, it is as IMPOSSIBLE for me to give my ASSENT unto it.* And again, Par. 40. *In ALL Cases whatsoever, Assent or Dissent is a NECESSARY ACT of the Human Understanding.* And again, Par. 41. *To Assent to the Truth of any thing without sufficient Evidence for it, or to Dissent where I have such Evidence, is ALTOGETHER out of my Power, and consequently can never be the MATTER of a Divine Command.*

This is the only great Principle of Toland's *CHRISTIANITY NOT MYSTERIOUS*, and that which he all along Applies, to the Undermining all *Revealed Religion*, and the *Mysteries* of the Gospel; and if it were true, wou'd have had its Effect: But I hope, it is sufficiently Confuted already, in an Answer to that Book. And therefore among the many dangerous and pernicious Absurdities, with which this Principle is fraught, I shall only take leave to add here.

I. That upon this Principle there could be no such thing as *OPINION*, nor could there be any other sort of Knowledge, but that of *SCIENCE*. For where there is sufficient Evidence for a Proposition, 'Tis not in your power to withhold your Assent; and where it is not sufficient, it is impossible for you to give any Assent at all; Nay, you must necessarily Dis-

Dissent from it ; they are both *Necessary*, absolutely *Necessary* Acts of the Understanding. So that thus all intermediate Degrees of *Probability*, between a *Necessary Assent*, or a *Necessary Dissent*, are quite blown away ; and a Man can never be in the *Wrong*, or in *Doubt* about any thing, because his Assent can never alter, but in proportion to the clearness of the Proof or Evidence.

2. There can be no such thing as *FAITH* or possibility of believing *God* or *Man* ; For, if either give you Evidence sufficient in his Lordship's Sense for what they would have you believe, your *Assent* must necessarily follow ; and then it is *Knowledge*, and not *Faith*. But, if the Evidence they give you is not sufficient, then it is neither *Faith* nor *Opinion*, but down-right *Ignorance*, i. e. the want of that *Knowledge*, which is the necessary Consequence of *Evidence*.

3. There can be no such thing as *CHRISTIAN Faith*, or believing the *Mysteries* of the Gospel ; because the nature of Every one of them is such, that you are not capable of any real Conception and true *Idea* of them, as they are in themselves ; and much less of such *Evidence* for each of them, as shall make it impossible for you not to Assent to the Truth of them. Nay, and if you were capable of a *Real Idea* of them, and of such *Evidence* as should make it necessary for you to Assent to the Truth of them ; that *Assent* would be *Knowledge*, and not *Faith*. If all
Assent

Assent of the Mind to the Truth of any Proposition, be altogether out of our own Power, without such *Evidence* as shall make it Necessary; is any thing plainer than, that we can give that *Assent* to nothing, even upon the Word or Testimony of GOD?

I shall make all this plain by an Instance in one *Christian Doctrine*, or *Proposition*, viz. that in *Phil. 3. 21.* That *Our vile Body shall be changed into the likeness of Christ's Glorious Body.* If we had a *True Conception* of that *Change*, and such *Evidence* for its being wrought in us at the last Day, as should make our *Assent* Necessary, and put it intirely out of our power to Dissent; then that *Assent* of ours wou'd be strictly *Knowledge*, or *Science*.

If I had some faint Notion of that *Change*, and such Proof or Evidence for the Truth of it, as would not make the *Assent* of my Mind to it Necessary, then this would be *Opinion* only; and it would have *More* or *Less* of the nature of *Knowledge* or *Science* in it; as the *Idea* I had of that *Change*, and the *Evidence* I had for it were more or less perfect.

But, if I have not the least *Idea* or Conception of what that *Change* will be; and consequently am not capable of the least degree of *Evidence* for the Truth of this particular *Doctrine*, or *Proposition*; and that I give a firm and hearty *Assent* to it, not upon the account of any *Proof* or *Evidence* of the truth of the Thing it self; much less such

Evidence as shall make my Assent Necessary; But, because I have sufficient Proof of its being Revealed by God; Then it is truly and properly *Christian Faith*. According to that short and wonderful Definition of it in *Heb. II. 1.* That it is *The Evidence of Things not seen*; which fully expresseth the Two Ingredients of our Christian Faith: Namely, That it is First, a giving our Assent to things intirely out of the reach of all our discerning Faculties; and to Particulars, for which we can therefore have no *Proof* or *Evidence*, even of their very *Being*. And, Secondly, That it is not however a *Blind*, *Precarious*, or *Irrational* Assent, but upon sufficient Evidence of their being Revealed by God. So that my Assent is not founded upon any Proof of the Doctrine, or Proposition it self; but upon the Testimony or Word of God.

I must not omit here, what shews the yet more exceeding *Rashness*, and destructive Nature of that *Possession* of his Lordship's; and that is, That even that *Proof* and *Evidence* we have of a Doctrine or Proposition being Revealed by God, tho' it is in it self sufficient to *gain*, and even *require* our Assent to it; Nay, and without a Command over and above for the belief of it, upon pain of Damnation: Yet it is not such as leaves it *Out of our Power to withhold our Assent from it*; As witness those *Jews*, who heard our Saviour's *Doctrine*, and saw his *Miracles*; and yet attributed Them to *Beelzebub*. As witness those
who

who have been *Once Enlightned*, who have *Tasted the good Word of God*, and the *Powers of the World to come*; i. e. have had all the *Proof or Evidence* that hath been sufficient for their *Assent* to the *Truths of Christianity*, and have actually given their *Assent* to Them; and yet have withdrawn that *Assent* in spite of it, and *Fallen away* from Them. Whereas nothing is plainer than that upon his Lordship's Principle, there could be no such thing as an *Apostate* from Christianity.

Nay, God hath in great Wisdom contrived that *Evidence* or *Testimony* of the *Mysteries* of the *Gospel*, being *Revealed* by Him, which is the sole *Foundation* of our *Assent* to, or *Belief* of those *Divine Doctrines* or *Propositions*, that it should not leave it out of the *Power* of Men to *Withhold* their *Assent*; or even to *Withdraw* it after they have given it: That the *Faith* of *Christ* and his *Gospel* might depend more upon the *Heart* than the *Head*; and that *In seeing*, wicked and ill-disposed Men *Might not see*; and that *In hearing*, they *might not understand*. That those of greatest *Reach* of *Understanding* and *Learning*, who require such an *Evidence*, as his Lordship *Insists* on, might after the closest *Application* and *Search* for it, remain *Infidels*: And that, on the contrary, those who had neither *Leisure* or *Capacity* to *Weigh* and *Consider* all the *Evidences* of *Christianity*, might however, from the *Humility* and *Sincerity* of their *Hearts*, *Believe* and be *Saved*.

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The reason of which is, because in the Assent we give to a *Divine Doctrine* or *Proposition*, we are to be Determin'd not by such insuperable Evidence, but by the highest *Probability* on one side or the other; and to fix that Assent to what appears to have the greatest Degrees of it. We are to be Concluded by what is in it self most *Reasonable*; we are to weigh the Evidences on both 'sides of the Doctrine or Proposition, and close with that which ought to *Preponderate*. And as this is a sufficient Foundation for our Faith of that Doctrine or Proposition, I have Instanced in; so it leaves our *Assent* properly *Faith*, without destroying the Worth and Excellency, not to say the very Nature of *Faith*, by resolving it wholly into *Knowledge*: Which, such an Evidence as his Lordship insists on would do; Nay, tho' we had it not for the Doctrine or Proposition it self, but even as a Testimony of its coming from God. And this is the very Reason of that Saying of our Saviour's to *Thomas*, *John 22. 29. Blessed are they that have not Seen, and yet have Believed, i. e.* They who require no such *Sensible*, or *Demonstrative* Evidence as you have had for the belief of my *Resurrection*: But, by removing those obstinate Prejudices you were under, can yield their *Assent* to it, and believe it firmly upon such Rational Evidence, as shall not amount to a *Sensible*, or a *Demonstrative* Proof.

My Reader, who very innocently hitherto took *Faith* to be an *Assent of his Mind to a Divine Doctrine or Proposition*, not upon such Evidence as should make him believe whether he would or no; but upon the Testimony of God, can't but be amazed what is now become of our Faith of the Mysteries of the Gospel, and what it will turn to before we have done, since it is no longer *Belief* or *Assent*.

Par. XL, XLI. After the Christian *Faith* of the *Mysteries* of the Gospel had been thus *Made away*, and lay dead and buried for Nineteen Paragraphs together; here at length, instead of meeting it raised to Life again, we are surprized with a meer *Apparition* only, and scarce a *Shadow* of it. His Lordship is very positive, that *The Faith, or Belief required by the Gospel is nothing but CONSIDERATION*, or a *Disposition* of Mind to consider impartially. Since then, the Man of moderate Capacity is so far enlightned, as to know, what I am confident he never knew before, *Viz.* That *Faith* is nothing else but *Consideration*; and that *Consideration* is *Faith*; it concerns him not a little to know what sort of *Consideration* this is. His Lordship explains it thus, *'Tis the Consideration of such Evidence as is offer'd me, and the diligent Application of my self to such Consideration—— And upon the Supposition of such a Disposition and Application, Assent to a Truth, for which such Evidence is offered, must of Necessity follow.* So then, the whole

whole Order and *Analogy* of our Christian *Faith* in his Lordship's Sense is thus.

First, God reveals to us a Christian *Doctrine* or *Proposition*. There is nothing so plain as an *Instance*; let it be the same we had before; namely, That Our vile Body shall be changed into the *Likeness* of Christ's Glorious Body.

Secondly, He gives you such *Evidence* of the *Truth* of that Proposition, that when you consider it impartially, it will be impossible for you to withhold your Assent from it. Par. 22.

Thirdly, God must give you a plain particular Command, to consider the Evidence he gives you for that Proposition, Par. 4.

Fourthly, There must be a Disposition for the Consideration of that Evidence, and now we are come to *Faith*. This Consideration of the Evidence given, is the whole, intire, adequate Notion of our Faith of any Christian Mystery.

Fifthly, When that Evidence is so consider'd, then your Assent to it follows by a fatal, Necessary Consequence; and now we have left Faith Behind, which vanisheth all at once, and gives Place to Knowledge, or Science. So that now we believe that Proposition no longer, *i. e.* In his Lordship's Stile, we leave off considering of it, and do at last give such an Assent to the Truth of it, as is not in our Power to withhold; which is built upon Almighty Invincible Evidence, and extorts that Assent from us, whether we will or no.

Now

Now in this *Gradation* and *Scheme* of Faith, which is most exactly his Lordship's, not one of those five *Articles* have any Truth in them but the first, *Viz.* That God hath reveal'd that *Divine Doctrine*, or *Proposition* to us. For the Truth of the Matter is thus. We are not capable of the least *Proof* or *Evidence* of the Truth of that *Proposition*; much less of such Evidence of the Truth of it, as shall Leave it out of our Power to withhold our Assent. Nor can we consider such Proof as we are no way capable of; all the Proof or Evidence we can have of it is, that it is reveal'd by God. Nor have we any Evidence even of this, which shall take away from us the Power of withholding our Assent: But such *Proof* and *Evidence* only as is sufficient to convince every reasonable and unprejudiced Person, and shall leave him utterly without Excuse when he comes to be Tryed for his Infidelity, if he doth not give his Assent to it. So that, God be praised, instead of being so *Perplexed* and *Intricate*, the Faith of this *Proposition* is a *Plain* and *Easy* Thing, *Viz.* 'Tis the giving our Assent to the Truth of a Thing we have no *Conception* or *Idea* of, and therefore are now capable of no Proof or Evidence of it; and this because it is reveal'd by God; And because we have such *Proof* of its coming from Him, as tho' it doth not amount to *Mathematical Demonstration*, or *Sensible Evidence*, which extorts our Assent; yet it is abundantly sufficient to convince the Judgments of all People

ple; who have Opportunities of receiving it, and to work a *Firm* and *Constant* Assent in all who will be at the Trouble, and are capable of weighing and considering it. Nay, and if they have not a *Capacity* or *Learning* to see and feel the utmost Strength and Force of that *Proof* and *Evidence*; yet if they see enough to incline them to a sincere and hearty *Assent* to the Truths of the Gospel, as coming from God, it may be however a very acceptable and excellent Faith.

In the Close of Paragraph XLI. His Lordship explains all this by a *Similitude*, which puts this Fundamental Opinion of his past all Colour or Evasion. *It is in my Power either to shut my Eyes, or to keep them open, and to turn them to or from an Object: But supposing my Eyes to be open, and otherwise sufficiently well disposed, and no Obstruction to be in the way, to see or not to see a proper Object in a good Light, and at a competent Distance before them, is not a Thing of Choice, but of absolute and unavoidable Necessity.* The Application his Lordship says is very easy; and so it is very easy and obvious upon the Principle laid down by him. And since it is left to his Readers, let us then apply it to the same Doctrine or Proposition we made use of before. *Our vile Body shall be changed into the Likeness of Christ's Glorious Body.*

Then, as a *Visible* Substance is the *Proper* Object of our Sight, so this future *Change* is a proper Object of our Understanding.

As the Eye at one Look takes in the *Real Similitude* of a Man; so the Mind hath a *Direct* and *Intellectual* View of that Glorious Change.

As a Man who turns his Face to an human Body and *Opens* his Eyes, cannot help seeing it; so the Mind of Man when it applies it self to the *Proof* or *Evidence* God hath given us of that Proposition, it is no longer in its Power to withhold its Assent to the Truth of it.

As God can't command you to See an Object when your *Back* is towards it, nor to give any Credit even to its very *Being* till you see it; but may command you to open your Eyes and look towards it, and then you will give Credit to it in Spite of your Teeth: So he can't command you to give your Assent to the Truth of this *Doctrine* of a future Change; But he may Command you to Consider the Evidence he gives you for that Change; and unless the Eyes of your Understanding are stone blind, you will then as necessarily give your Assent to the Truth of it, as you do to the Being of an Object you look upon.

Lastly, which is the Constant use made of this great Principle by all the Enemies of Revelation; As a Man can See *nothing* but a *Visible* Substance, which is the proper Object of Sight; and can have no Perception at all, directly or indirectly of any thing beside; and consequently by the quickest Sensation
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of that Organ, can never be lead into the Knowledge or Belief of an *Invisible* Object : So He can never give his Assent to the Truth of that future Change, or any other *Mystery* of the Gospel, farther than it is the proper Object of our Intellectual Faculties ; and than the Mind hath such *Irresistible* Evidence for the Truth of that Doctrine, or any other, as shall put it out of its Power to Assent to it.

You see how this *Grand* Principle of the *Atheists*, *Deists*, and *Freethinkers* of all kinds ; which they wind and turn into many shapes ; and, which is at the bottom of all their Sophistry, is not only Asserted in express Terms, but fully Explained and Established. Whereas after all, our Christian Faith, which is thus Perplex'd and Disturbed, not to say Destroyed with *Notion* and *Nicity*, is a plain thing ; and is Thus in short.

The Mind hath no more to do with any *Real Idea*, or *Perception* of that Change, as it is in it self ; or with any such irresistible Evidence for the Truth and Reality of it, than a *Blind* Man hath to do with *Light* and *Colours*. The *Body* of a Man is the Object only of *SENSE* ; Whether there will be a *Change* of that Body which we cannot now perceive, or in this Life have any such Idea or Evidence of as the Eye hath of a visible Substance, is the Object of our *REASON* ; But the Real True *Nature* of that Change, and such *Evidence* as will arise from an actual Perception of it, is the Object of neither *Sense* nor *Reason*, but of *FAITH* alone.

And

And that *Faith* is our *Actual* Assent to the Truth of that Doctrine, only upon the *Testimony* or *Word* of God; And that *Testimony* we now have of its coming from him, is neither *Demonstration*, nor *Sensible* Evidence, such as puts it out of our power to withhold our Assent; but such as is abundantly sufficient to Convince all considering and unprejudic'd Persons : So that if they have not *Faith*, i. e. Do not give their *Assent* to the *Truth* of that *Doctrine* or Proposition, the Damnation threatened to the Want of that Faith or Assent will justly be chargeable upon themselves.

There being so little Foundation in *Religion* or *Reason* for this great Principle of his Lordship's, it was very hard for him not to fall into many exprefs Contradictions and Inconsistencies. Such as these in his own Words.

Faith is a Thing most certainly commanded by God. par. 22.

And yet, *My Assent to the Truth of any thing, can never be the Matter of a Divine Command.* par. 41.

Faith is when my Assent is grounded Purely and Only on the Testimony of another. par. 40. i. e. Without any Evidence of the Truth of what he relates.

Faith or Belief which is Commanded by God, is nothing else but Consideration or Application of the Mind to Evidence. par. 40, 41. i. e. Such as will put it out of your Power to Dissent. par. 22.

And

Even the very *Act* of *Assent* may in common way of Speech, be call'd a *DUTY*. par. 41.

Faith or *Belief* is a *Duty* Commanded and required by God. par. 40.

The *Authority* or *Testimony* of God is *Evidence* beyond *Exception*, for the *Truth* of any *Doctrine*. Preface.

The *Word* or *Testimony* of Another for the *Truth* of a *Proposition*, was ever distinguished from *Proof* or *Evidence* for it: And there is a great *Difference* between *Evidence* for the *Truth* of the *Proposition* it *Self*; and *Evidence* of its coming from any *Person* *Human* or *Divine*. But here *Testimony* is *Evidence*,

And yet, To give my *Assent* to any *DOCTRINE*, cannot be the *Subject Matter* of any *Command* of God. par. 22.

And yet, In ALL CASES WHATSOEVER *Assent* or *Dissent* is a necessary *Act* of the *Human Understanding*. par. 40.

Par. 41. And yet, Wherever God hath given me sufficient *Evidence* of any *Truth*, if I do not give my *Assent* unto it; I am certainly guilty of a *Sin*.

And again, par. 42. When I have sufficient *Evidence* of any *Truth*, I must as unavoidably give my *Assent* unto it, as I cannot but see an *Object* of *Sight*, that in a clear open *Light* is placed before me, within a due *Distance*, when my *Eyes* are open and turned towards it. So

and Evidence is Testimony.

So then, the Word of God is Evidence for any Truth, or Doctrine : And yet God must give you Evidence for the Truth of that very Doctrine, or Proposition it self; Nay, such as shall amount even to Demonstration, or sensible Evidence, or you can never give your Assent to it.

Pres. If a Man even without any Fault of his own is mistaken in those Things which according to the Tenor of the Gospel, are necessary to our Eternal Salvation, He can have no Title to that Reward which God hath promised only to true Believers.

And yet, Par. 43. *If you cannot give your Assent to these Truths or Doctrines [of the Gospel] and are for that Reason excluded both from the Ministry and Communion too; yet what Allowance God who is the Searcher of Hearts, will make for your want of Capacity or Evidence, is what he himself alone is able to determine.*

Pray who was it that said just now, That such an one can have no Title to the Reward

Reward promised Only to true Believers? Then sure a Church *Universal* or *Particular* may Declare the Belief of those Truths or Doctrines, which are agreeable to the Tenor of the Gospel, necessary to that Reward, which is Eternal Salvation. What can be the Design of taking so much Pains to shew Men that they may attain Eternal Salvation, without having any Title to it?

There are DEGREES of Assent with Respect to the Truth of a Doctrine, in Proportion to the Degrees both of Apprehension and PROOF, par. 46.

And yet, Par. 22. *If I want such Evidence of the Truth of a Doctrine or Proposition, as shall put it out of my Power to withhold my Assent from it, it is impossible for me to give my Assent unto it. What is come of the Degrees in Respect of the PROOF?*

Stedfastness of Belief doth not consist in the

i. e. Faith is not believing; the Truth of

Strength of that Speculative Assent which a Man gives to any Doctrine. But altogether in a Firmness of Purpose of leading his Life in Conformity to it. par. 47.

He may DOUBT in Speculation, and yet he may be a steadfast Believer, and hold fast the Profession of his Faith without wavering. par. 47.

True saving Faith is not to be measured by its Intrinsic Firmness, but ALTOGETHER, by its Fruitfulness in Holy Desires and good Works. par. 47.

The Assent which Men give to the Truth

of the Doctrines and Mysteries of the Gospel, but living a good Life; *i. e.* Living in Conformity to what a Man doth not Steadfastly believe.

I can't put this Contradiction in a more glaring Light; Open your Eyes and turn towards it, and withhold your Admiration, if it be in your Power.

ALTOGETHER!
Then Intrinsic Faith is a very fruitless, insignificant thing. But is not the Intrinsic Firmness the Cause of holy Desires, and Incitement to good Works? And doth not Fruitfulness increase or decrease in Proportion to the Intrinsic Firmness of our Faith?

And yet, There is no Ground of Assent
to

of any Doctrines 'or Propositions, from the different Grounds or Evidence upon which it is given, takes unto it self three different Denominations, Viz. Knowledge or Science; Opinion; Belief or Faith. Par. 40.

to any Doctrine whatsoever but Evidence; and such Evidence as shall leave it out of your Power to withhold that Assent, Par. 22. 40, 41, &c. which is Science. What is become of Opinion, and Faith?

I wish his Lordship wou'd range the Doctrines and Mysteries of the Gospel under these three Heads; Science, Opinion, Faith: That so a Man of moderate Capacity might be able to distinguish which of them are strictly Science, which he is to have some Opinion of, and which require his Faith? For till now 'tis like he imagined he was to give his Assent to them all as equally true, and alike founded upon the same Divine Testimony.

When one of a mean Capacity considers the Common OBJECTI-ONS that have been made against this Do-ctrine of the Resurrecti-on, par. 47.

He finding the Argu-ments for a Resurrecti-on to have a greater In-fluence upon him; than the OBJECTIONS which are brought against it, his Assent inclines that way, par. 47.

Objections! against what? Against such Evidence for the Truth of it, as shall put it out of his Pow-er to withhold his Assent. It wou'd be pleasant enough, to hear a Sett of Obje-ctions raised against Two and Two ma-king Four.

Inclines only! where is the Almighty Irre-sistible Evidence con-tended for all along? And which should make him believe that Doctrine whether he would or no? If his Lordship says, this is not for a Man of a *Moderate Capacity*; let it be then for a Man of *Great Capacity*. Then say I, the former hath a great Advantage of the latter, being ca-pable of Faith; where-as a *Great Capacity* is capable only of *Science*.

D There

There is as little Use of Arguments as Objections upon his Lordship's great Principle; except that one Demonstration for every Doctrine and Mystery, which shall make it undeniable, as that Two and Two make Four.

My Assent may be grounded purely and only upon the Testimony of another, par. 40.

It is beyond the Power of Human Understanding, to conceive this Mystery, Viz. Of the Trinity, par. 35.

Whether there be any thing in Christianity, which may properly be called a Mystery, according to the Genuine Mea-

And yet all along you must bow only before the Light of irresistible EVIDENCE
par. 22. 40, 41, 42, &c.

It is beyond the Power of Human Understanding to conceive, upon these Principles, how there can be any such thing as Mystery in Christianity.

That Mystery hath not the same Signification in the New Testament which speaks of the Mysteries of the Kingdom
dom

ning of that Term, to me seems to be no more but a Contention about a WORD, which the Apostle expressly forbids, 2 Tim. 2. 14. Strive not about Words. And therefore I have avoided both in my Book and Appendix, so much as to mention the Word MYSTERY, about which so great a NOISE has of late been made. For the Reason of this, his Lordship refers you to Part 2. Sect. 71. of the Book, namely, Because Religion doth not consist in Terms of Art, or Forms of Expression. [Appen. to Gent. Rel]

dom of God; which it hath in Heathen Authors, who speak of the Kingdom of the Devil, is easily granted.

But St. Paul, who speaks very Properly, tells us in the most Genuine Meaning of that Term [not of Art, but of Divine Wisdom and Grace,] 1 Cor. 15. 51. Behold I shew you a Mystery, we shall all be changed. Therefore to maintain this to be a Mystery, both the Word and the Thing, is the indispensable Duty of a Christian, tho' it may be no Part of a Gentleman's Religion; but much more strictly is this incumbent upon One who is a Steward of the Mysteries of God.

Thus you see you may Believe a Christian Doctrine, and yet not give your Assent to it; you may give your Assent to a Christian Doctrine, and yet not believe it. And that to Dissent from a Christian Doctrine Cannot be a Sin; but to Disbelieve it May be a Sin.

Par.

Par. XLII. This following 42d Paragraph shews the main Scope of all this Nicety. *If from all such Truths as I thus come to the Knowledge of, i. e. By such Evidence as is equal to, or exceeds that of the Sense of Seeing, I impartially infer all the Commands of God, or Rules of Duty that I can find to follow from them, and with my utmost Diligence and Sincerity, do constantly conform my Practice thereunto, I have then done all that in this Case lyes within my Power, and consequently all that God can be supposed to require from me :* For giving my Assent to any of his *Doctrines* or *Mysteries*, is entirely out of my Power, and God cannot be supposed to require it from me. Yes, there it is; the Drift of all this Treatise, and of almost all his Lordship hath published of late, is to resolve all Duty into the plain and expresse *Commands of God himself*; insomuch that *If a Doctrine be in itself never so true, and plainly revealed; yet if God hath not over and above laid a Command upon me to believe it, it is no Sin to disbelieve it;* And yet if God had laid an Hundred Commands upon me, I cannot give my Assent to it, till I find such Evidence as shall Put it out of my Power to withhold that Assent.

Par. XXIV, XXV, XXVI. In these three Paragraphs his Lordship dilates upon the Manner of our conceiving God, and the Things of *Another World*; namely by *Analogy*, which he applys particularly to the Trinity of Persons in the Godhead. Here his Lordship refers to a Sermon Preached by his Grace the Lord

Lord Archbishop of Dublin, Entitled, *Divine Predestination and Fore-knowledge consistent with the Freedom of Man's Will*; wherein he says, *His Grace teaches, That Wisdom, Foresight, Understanding, are Things of Another Kind in God, than what they are in Man.* And his Lordship himself here teaches, that *The Foundation of this Analogy is not Internally, but in a Similitude only of Outward Effects.* Upon which I shall only make this short Remark at present, That both their Opinions are equally Erroneous, and intirely destructive of all *Reveal'd Religion*; and that by a direct and immediate Consequence of their falling in with the *Socinians*, and turning our whole Christianity into *Figure and Metaphor.* In-somuch that those Performances, especially That of his Grace's, have given great Offence; and have not only administred such Occasion of Cavil and Objection against our Christian *Mysteries*, as will not easily be removed; but have strangely prejudiced the World against that *True and Proper* Notion of Analogy, from the right Stating and Apprehension of which alone, the whole *Socinian Hypothesis* is to be quite Overthrown.

I think there is just Cause of Complaint here, not that his Grace and his Lordship have taken no Notice of a certain Answer to a Book Entitled, *Christianity not Mystrious*, tho' published some Years before either that *Sermon*, or the *Plain Method*, &c. and wherein they found that Analogy explain'd at large, and

and apply'd to our Christian Myſteries, particularly to the *Doctrine of the Trinity*, and *Eternal Generation of the Son*; Not, I ſay, that they have not thought fit to make the leaſt mention of the Author; But for ſomething of greater Conſequence, namely, Becauſe they have haſtily taken up one half only of a Notion, and publiſhed it to the World abortive and unformed, and after a Crude and Undigeſted Manner. I mean by their inſiſting all upon that **Figure** only and **Metaphor**, which runs thro' our thinking and ſpeaking of God and the *Myſteries* of the Goſpel, without ſetting out the true *Bounds* and *Limits* of *Human Underſtanding*; or making any Proviſion for the *Reality* and true *Foundation* of that *Analogy* in the Nature both of GOD and MAN: Of which I give no more than this ſhort and obſcure *Hint* in this Place, leaſt peradventure the World may be amuſed with this Notion likewise Surprizingly *Miſtaken* and *Miſapply'd*.

If his Lordſhip after all this, ſhou'd ſay, that by *Evidence* he means only Evidence of the Doctrine or Proposition coming from God, and being revealed by him. I anſwer, That this is a very good *Meaning*; and then he is only to be blamed for meaning one thing *Himſelf*, and leaving his *Readers* to mean quite the Contrary. The Reader meets with nothing but Proof and Evidence for the Truth of the Doctrine or Proposition *It ſelf*; and that God muſt give him ſuch Proof and Evidence

Evidence for it, as shall put it out of his Power to *Withhold his Assent*: But now after the Book is printed and published in *England and Ireland*, 'tis pleasant that the Bishop, or any one for him, shou'd declare He *Means* nothing of *What is said*, but quite *Another Thing*, as different from it as *Light* from *Darkness*. 'Tis plain that if this be ever so true, we can have no more than his Lordship's own Word for it; and if it be granted, all that can be gained by it is, that it renders that Treatise and the Author, very Inconsistent; and puts him under a Necessity of disclaiming the Book, if he resolves to stick to his *Meaning*.

However, tho' there is not the least Ground for this Apology in the Book, and but one short Hint of it in the Preface, yet I would leave Room for the making of it still. I mean for his Lordship to make this frank and publick Declaration to the World, *Viz.* That we are to give our *Assent* to the *Truths*, or *MYSTERIES* (I beg his Lordship's Pardon for making Use of that Term of Art) of the Gospel purely upon the Testimony or Word of God; And not upon such *Proof* or *Evidence* for the Doctrines or Propositions themselves in which they are contained, as shall make that Assent absolutely necessary; and withal, that such an Assent is Faith: And then let him read over that Treatise, which bears his Name, without being filled with many *Anxious* and *Disquieting* Thoughts, and blushing almost at every Paragraph. If

If his Lordship says, his farther *Meaning* is, That this Proof or Evidence he speaks of never becomes so insuperable and irresistible unless a Man have a great Capacity and Learning, and right Disposition to receive it. Then say I, the Man of *Moderate* Capacity hath arriven to an exalted Degree of Knowledge when he hath learned this great Point of Doctrine; namely, that a Man can never give his *Assent* to the *Truths* of the Gospel till he is rightly disposed for it; and that when once he is disposed, he must believe them whether he will or no: And that after all, this *Assent* of his is not *Faith*. A Man of a tolerable *Good* Capacity sees plainly, that upon this grand Principle, those who are *Rightly* disposed to receive such invincible *Evidence*, are not capable of *Faith*, but of necessary *Science*; and that he alone who is *Indisposed* for such Evidence, is in a Condition of *Believing* upon the bare *Word* or Testimony either of God or Man.

Par. XXXVIII. I have reserved this Paragraph to be consider'd with the 43d and 44th, because they all tend to exclude the *Church* intirely from being any Part of that *Plain* and *Easy* Method, whereby a Man of *Moderate* Capacity may arrive at *Full* Satisfaction in *All* Things that concern his Everlasting Salvation. Whereas a Man would think, the *Doctrines* and *Determinations* of a *Pure* and *Orthodox* Church, and the having a just Regard to and Dependance upon them,

were

were the *Plainest* and *Easiest* Method, especially for a Man of a *Moderate* Capacity. 'Tis true, his Lordship brings a Quotation from the Bishop of *Vivier's*, importing, that it is *Impossible for a Man to be deceived while he hears to the Church*. And in one Part of this long Paragraph, he mentions the Absurdity of a *Man's* never inquiring into the Grounds of this or that particular Doctrine, and not informing himself of any other thing, save only to know what the Church teaches, and receiving it upon her bare Authority. And thus far all is well, I mean as it is levelled at a blind implicate Assent to Doctrines of Faith: Save only that upon his Lordship's Grand Principle, there can be no such Thing as a *Blind Implicate Assent Possible* in Nature. For *Assent or Dissent is a necessary Act of human Understanding*; and are both entirely out of a Man's Power: And without such Evidence as shall Put it out of his Power to withhold his Assent, he can give no Assent at all. And to use his Lordship's own *Similitude*, 'tis as impossible for a Man to give a *Blind and Implicate Assent* to any Doctrine, as to See an Object with his Eyes shut.

I wish this irreconcilable Inconsistency, and glaring Contradiction, were the worst of this Paragraph, which under Colour of condemning what is plainly impossible upon his Lordship's Supposition, *Viz.* That implicate Assent required by the Church of Rome, all Regard to the Determinations of any Church whatsoever, and Dependance upon

its *Doctrines* and *Decisions*, are exploded and even ridiculed.

His Lordship asketh Three Questions, by way of Confuting them who tell him, *That the only certain Way of coming to the Knowledge of all Things that are necessary to Eternal SALVATION, IS TO HAVE RECOURSE TO THE CHURCH*; Each of which conclude as well against any Deference or Regard at all to be given to the Authority of any Church *Uncorrupt* and *Pure*; as against that implicate Assent which is pay'd to a *Corrupt* Church. Says his Lordship, *I have long been seeking for (not an Artful, Superficial, and Plausible; but) a Clear, Solid, and Satisfactory Answer, but never yet could meet with it. Lo! Then here is the Man who steps forth and dares to undertake this, and to leave it to our Readers to judge on which side the Artful, Superficial and Plausible lies; and on which side the Clear, Solid and Satisfactory.*

Quest. 1. *How shall I be assured that God hath commanded me to give my self up to the Guidance of any such Society of Men who are called the Church? For if he hath not commanded it, it is certain that no Obligation can lie upon me to do it in Order to my Salvation.* I answer, That the **Artful** and **Plausible** is Countenanced in that Expression of *Giving my self UP to the Guidance*; which in common speaking signifies as well the yielding a just *Veneration* and *Regard* to the *Doctrines* and *Decisions* of a *Pure* Church, as a *Blind* Assent to the Determination of a corrupt

corrupt Church. And that the *Clear* and *Satisfactory* would have consisted in not leaving the Argument to Conclude indifferently against *Both*; but in distinguishing, and in having made a little Provision, at least by some favourable Hint, for that *Regard* that a Man of a Moderate Capacity ought to pay to the *Judgment* and *Authority* of a *Pure Church*. And then Men of a *Moderate Capacity* would have learned a Doctrine directly opposite to what his Lordship here establisheth; namely, that tho' a plain Man doth in all things, in which he cannot be supposed capable of judging, give himself up to the Guidance of a *Pure Church*, and depend upon her bare Authority, he may find a *Certain way to Heaven*.

Quest. 2. *In the midst of all the Disputes that are about this Matter, [the Things that are necessary to my Eternal Salvation] How shall I be sufficiently informed who those Men are that alone do Compose and Constitute this Church, which is thus to be my Guide? For if I have not some authentick Rule whereby to know this, I may very innocently mistake one Society of Men for the Church, instead of another.* I answer, that if you go about to perswade a Man of *Moderate Capacity* and altogether illiterate, to yield himself to the *Guidance and Determinations* of the *Church of England or Ireland*, as a *Safe and Excellent Guide* in *All Disputes about Things necessary to his Eternal Salvation*; And then put my Lord's Question into his Mouth, you will see he will be too hard for you, *Viz. How shall I be informed*

med who those Men are who compose this Church which is thus to be my Guide? What authentick Rule is there whereby to know this, that I may not mistake one Society of Men for the Church, instead of another. So that you see this way of reasoning concludes against all Churches True or False; and against all Regard to be paid them either implicate or reasonable. Nay it destroys the very Being of any Church, by going upon a Supposition that it is impossible to tell who they are that compose it.

Quest. 3. How shall I know who it is that hath unquestionable Authority to propose the Dictates of the Church unto me, and also to explain them, if I do not sufficiently apprehend or understand them? Put this likewise into the Mouth of a Man of Moderate Capacity on the aforesaid Occasion, and then see whether ever you can persuade him to have any Regard or Deference for the Doctrines or Decisions of any Church whatsoever. For poor Man! How shall he know who hath unquestionable Authority to propose the Dictates of the Church (that Imaginary Creature of the Brain) and also to explain them?

Thus the *Authority* of the Church is here intirely laid aside as a Means of acquiring the Knowledge of God's Commands, or in his Lordship's Phrase, the *Commands of God himself*; and I appeal to any one who reads this long Paragraph, whether the whole Strein of it is not equally bent against all Churches. And accordingly hear the Conclusion and Result of the whole, *If a Man.*

i. e. Of moderate Capacity, *Useth the Light of Reason and Scripture, and make them the Rule of his Life and Actions, he hath done all that a good and a wise Man can require from him.* But a Good and a Wise Man would require from him what his Lordship is not pleased to give the least *Hint* of; namely, that he should have a great *Dependance* upon, and a just *REGARD* for all the *Decisions* and *Determinations* of the Church; and esteem them to be of greater Weight than the *Opinions* of any private Person, tho' of *Great Capacity* and *Learning*. And surely then, considering the Weakness of Reason in much the greater Part of Mankind, how unable they are to interpret Scripture rightly, and therefore apt to run into many *Mistakes* and *Errors* in Matters relating to their *Eternal Salvation*, this should not have been omitted here; much less have been intirely excluded, and that too not without an *Air of Contempt* and *Ridicule*.

It cannot be sufficiently wondred at, that in a Book with this Title, *A Plain and Easy Method whereby a Man of MODERATE CAPACITY* may arrive at *Full Satisfaction in ALL Things that concern his Everlasting Salvation*; The Direction and Authority of the Church shou'd not have one Paragraph thro' the whole, no nor so much as be once recommended for that Purpose. And therefore I beg his Lordship's Consent to supply that great *Omission*, and next to the *Holy Bible*, to recommend especially to all Men of a
Moderate

Moderate Capacity, The Common Prayer Book, Articles and Homilies of the Church, as most effectually answering that comprehensive Title : And I presume upon his Lordship's Leave to do this the rather, lest otherwise People may have some Colour to imagine that his whole Treatise was wrote with Design to Lessen them in the Opinion of the World, or indeed totally to Exclude them.

Par. XLIII. This and the following Paragraph is an Answer to this Question in the latter End of the 42d. *How far it is lawful for any Church to require from me an absolute and explicate Assent to any, and what Doctrines ? i. e. To require that Assent which is impossible for me to give without irresistible Evidence; and which it is not in my Power to withhold when I have such Evidence : That Assent which is a Necessary Act of human Understanding.* This is pleasant, however I beseech my Reader to contain himself, and see what this will End in.

The first Conclusion for the Deciding of that Question is, *If Any Church shall positively pronounce Damnation against Any Person, barely for not believing or Assenting to Any Doctrine whatsoever, without making Any Allowance either for his want of Evidence, or of Capacity to Apprehend it, such a Church I take to be in a very plain and palpable Error.* Now do but alter that Expression, *A Church's positively pronouncing Damnation for not believing a Doctrine ; and*
instead

instead of it put this other of a Church's *Declaring or Determining what Doctrines are necessary to be believed in Order to Salvation*, then you see thro' the whole Drift of this Paragraph; and that the Consequence which is aim'd at is thus, Because a Church can't *Pronounce* Damnation against a Person for not believing a Doctrine whether he hath *Opportunity* of the Gospel, and *Capacity* to apprehend it, or whether he hath them not; Therefore she cannot *Declare or Determine* what Doctrines are necessary to be believed in Order to Salvation where Men have both *Capacity* and *Opportunity*.

No Church, that I know of, *Positively* and *Expresly* pronounces Damnation against any Person without implying *Opportunity* of the Gospel, and some *Capacity* to apprehend it. I know some who have *Separated* from a *Pure and Holy* Church do pronounce Damnation even upon those Terms, by their obstinate Adherence to *Absolute* and *Unconditional* Decrees of Election and Reprobation. But however this is with other Churches, and with such who are of no Church at all, we may confidently Assert these two Things of our *Own* Church; First, that she hath taken upon her to *Declare* and *Determine* what Doctrines are necessary to be believed in Order to Salvation, without any *Express* Provision in each of them, for the want of *Capacity* and *Opportunity*; nay even to pronounce *Anathema* in some Cases, as the Church hath done all along.

And

- And Secondly, That the Capacity and Opportunity of the Person is always supposed; and that where Men want these, she leaves them to God's *Uncovenanted* Mercy and Goodness.

The Second Conclusion is thus, *The very utmost to which the Power of any Church Universal or Particular can be supposed in this Case to extend, is, To require an Assent to some Doctrines as Conditions of Communion only, not of Salvation.* The Scope of this Conclusion is thus far very Plain and Intelligible; namely, That No Church can take upon Her to Decide or Declare what Doctrines are Necessary to Salvation; nor require any Assent to them *As such*; nay tho' God himself hath ever so expressly declared them necessary to Salvation.

This is yet plainer from the Definition of a CHURCH laid down for a Foundation of these strange and unheard of Conclusions.

It is a Society joined together under a Religious Government or Ministry [Suppose of Bishops, or of Presbyters only] and maintaining Communion among themselves [Not with their Orthodox Bishop, who is the true Principle of Unity; And by living in Communion with whom Men are found Members of the Catholic Church; and the renouncing or cutting themselves off from the Communion of whom is truly and properly the Sin of Schism] In Order to Everlasting Salvation. The Import of all which is this, Because the Church is a Society in Order to Everlasting Salvation, and
that

that Everlasting Salvation can be given only by God, therefore it is out of the Power of the Church to determine what Doctrines are necessary to it; and she must require no Assent to them as necessary to Salvation, but as necessary to Communion only, *i. e.* In plain English, People must give their Assent to them, not as they are made Partakers of the blessed Means of Salvation in a spiritual Body; but as they become Members of a Civil Community.

Thus much of the Conclusion, I say is very plain, but what follows I freely own to be past my Comprehension. No Church ought to mean more upon this Occasion than this, You shall not be owned as a Member of our Communion, except among other Things you expressly profess your Belief of such certain Truths, which we Commonly Call Articles of Faith; nor shall you be admitted to the Ministry, or to any Share in Church Government, except you give your Assent to certain other Doctrines, which we Commonly call Articles of Peace.

There are many Difficulties in this Period I am perswaded insuperable to all, except to his Lordship who wrote it. As first, what is meant by adding that Expression [Commonly called] here and elsewhere to our Articles of Faith. It is hard to apprehend any other Design in this, than to insinuate that 'tis a Common or Vulgar Error to think the Belief of these Articles so Necessary to Salvation, as they are commonly esteemed; and

his Lordship can blame no one for being fixed in this Opinion till he declares the Contrary; because in Par. 4th. he establisheth this desperate Position, That if an Article of Faith is ever so plainly revealed by God, yet if he hath not given you besides, a Command to believe it, then it is no Sin to disbelieve it.

Secondly, It is impossible to conceive what his Lordship means by those OTHER THINGS a Man may be obliged to give his Assent to besides those Articles of Faith to which he is not obliged to give his Assent as necessary to Salvation.

Thirdly, I am at a great loss to know what Sort of Church Government is here intended, whether that of *Bishops*; or that of *Lay-Elders* and *Presbyters*. And there is this just Reason for the Scruple, because Bishops are left out of his Lordship's Definition of a Church; and in all these Paragraphs of *Church*, and *Church Government*, and *Power of the Church*, &c. I do not find the least mention of them or their Office.†

Fourthly, It requires a strong Imagination to reach the Import of those *Certain other Doctrines* to which the Church may require an Assent from the Bishops and Clergy [if this be the Ministry and Church Gover-

† How contrary is this to that little Treatise published some Years ago by his Lordship, with a handsome Dedication to the then Duke of Ormonde.

ment designed] and which the *Laity* are *Excused* from.

Lastly, I cannot comprehend what those Doctrines are we commonly call *Articles of Peace*, cut out by his Lordship for the Clergy only. **Commonly** call! Why I never heard of them before. I hope we have been all this while talking of *Christian Doctrines*, *i. e.* Doctrines of *Christ*, or we have been confounding our Readers; and if they are such, surely both Clergy and Laity are equally obliged to believe them as Articles of *Communion*; and he makes very *Bold* with the Doctrines of Christ, who teaches they are to be believed for Peace-Sake only.

Here I know my Reader is bewildred, being lead on insensibly into the Midst of a *Labyrinth*; and there I must leave him to *Wander*, till his Lordship is pleased to lend him a *Clew* to conduct him out of it.

Conclusion the Third, *There are some Doctrines without an Assent to which, a Man ought not to be admitted even into the Communion of any Church whatsoever.* Is it so! What then is become of the other two Conclusions? For can any other Reason be assigned why the Church ought not to admit a Man to Communion without Assent to some Christian Doctrines, or Doctrines of Christ, but because she judges and determines those Doctrines to be necessary to Salvation. What becomes of a *Comprehension* if Men are excluded for not giving their Assent to such Doctrines of Christ as
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are *No way necessary* to Salvation, if his Lordship can find them out; for all the Doctrines of Christ are necessary to the Salvation of such as have *Opportunity* of the Gospel, and *Capacity* to apprehend them.

So then now all is well again; the Church either *Universal* or *Particular*, may require a Man's Assent to some Doctrines before he is admitted to Communion; and unhappily for this very Reason, Because she judges those Doctrines necessary to Salvation; and as unhappily again, Because the Church is not a Temporal Society, but *A Society in Order to Salvation*. Infomuch that one great *End* and *Design* of our being *Incorporated* into a Spiritual *Body* is, That the Decision and Determination of all Points necessary to Salvation may not be left to the private Judgments of Men.

Hear the Result of all Three Conclusions in one, and indeed of the whole Treatise; If you *CANNOT* give your Assent to these *TRUTHS* or *DOCTRINES*, Viz. Articles of Faith, and Articles of Peace, And are for that Reason excluded both from the Ministry and Communion, what Allowance God, who is the Searcher of Hearts will make for your Want either of Capacity or Evidence, is what he himself alone is able to Determine. Observe the full Drift and Consequence of all that hath been thus labour'd. The Church, in Declaring or Determining what Doctrines are necessary to Salvation; and requiring an Assent to them as such, in-

croacheth upon the *Prerogative* of God, who *Alone* knows Mens Hearts; and therefore *Alone* can tell whether he will Damn them for want of Assenting to those Doctrines.

But my good Lord let it be consider'd, that the Church Determines no Doctrines to be *Necessary* to Salvation, nor requires *Assent* to them *As such*, which God himself hath not given *Her* sufficient Ground and Authority in the Holy Scriptures so to do: Sure she may declare those Doctrines *Necessary* which in Scripture appear to be *Necessary*. No, says my Lord, tho' God and the Church have both declared them necessary to Salvation, yet those Men *They* call the Church, know not how far God will give Allowance for the Want of *Capacity* and *Evidence*; and therefore they must not say any Doctrine is necessary to Salvation. But sure this is a very Fallacious and *Pernicious* Consequence, that because the Church can't declare what Doctrines are necessary to the Salvation of People who *Want Capacity* and *Evidence*; therefore she shan't declare what Doctrines are necessary to the Salvation of such as have both *Capacity* and *Evidence*.

The great Mischief of this Principle consists in the no small Encouragement it gives to all kind of *Infidelity*, and the mighty Comfort it affords to all Schismatics and Hereticks; and in that it renders the Church an *Imaginary*, *Useless* Body; and all its Decisions and Determinations *Trifling* and *Contemptible*.
But

But the great Oversight and Weakness of this *Grand* Position appears yet more from hence, That after all, no true Church that ever I heard of requires a Man's Assent to any Doctrines as necessary to Salvation, but when he actually hath both *Capacity* and *Evidence*, and sufficient *Information* with Relation to those Doctrines he is to give his Assent to. If his Lordship finds out any such Church which requires Assent to Doctrines which a Man hath no Capacity to understand, nor to apprehend any Proof or Evidence there is for them, I leave him to make as many solemn Conclusions and Decrees against it as he pleaseth.

I cannot make an End without a Remark on Par. XXXIX. the Beginning of which runs thus, *After many anxious and disquieting Thoughts, in the Time of my YOUTH, concerning my Everlasting Salvation, having at last, thro' the Blessing of God, with great Comfort and Satisfaction, settled my Mind in Ease upon the Principles of which I have hitherto been giving an Account; about Twenty Years ago I ventured to publish to the World a brief and plain Account of the Success I had met with in my Search after True Religion, &c.* After this his Lordship proceeds to recommend the Reading of Two Treatises he had wrote pursuant to these Principles; and desires his Reader to examine all that he had deliver'd by the Rule of his *Own* Reason, and that of the Holy Scriptures. Yes, there is the great Drift of the whole Treatise, that
even

even an *Illiterate* Person and of *Mean Capacity*, shall depend intirely upon the Rule of his *Own Reason* and *Scripture*, for full Satisfaction in all Things which concern his Everlasting Salvation. The Mention of *Reason* and *Scripture* is fair and plausible, and would do better in any Treatise which had not a Tendency to lessen Mens Regard and Deference to the Decisions and Determinations of any Church whatsoever. Tho' it may cost him some *Anxious* and *Disquieting* Thoughts, yet I beseech his Lordship to take a Serious and Impartial *Review* of those *Youthful Notions*, not to say dangerous Mistakes and Errors, upon which he hath founded most of what he hath hitherto published to the World. That *At last in the Time of his Maturer Age*, Thro' the Blessing of God, with great Comfort and Satisfaction, he may settle his Mind in Ease upon Sound and Orthodox Principles; quite contrary to Those I have been hitherto giving an Account of; such as are not destructive of all Revealed Religion, and that due Regard and Veneration Men ought to have for the Decisions and Determinations of a pure and uncorrupt Church.

I have now done with the Remarks which I could have enlarged considerably; but if these prove sufficient for Healing in some Degree the Wounds, which the propagating such Principles have given to *True Religion*; To prevent the dangerous Influence of them upon

But the great Oversight and Weakness of this *Grand Position* appears yet more from hence, That after all, no true Church that ever I heard of requires a Man's Assent to any Doctrines as necessary to Salvation, but when he actually hath both *Capacity* and *Evidence*, and sufficient *Information* with Relation to those Doctrines he is to give his Assent to. If his Lordship finds out any such Church which requires Assent to Doctrines which a Man hath no Capacity to understand, nor to apprehend any Proof or Evidence there is for them, I leave him to make as many solemn Conclusions and Decrees against it as he pleaseth.

I cannot make an End without a Remark on Par. XXXIX. the Beginning of which runs thus, *After many anxious and disquieting Thoughts, in the Time of my YOUTH, concerning my Everlasting Salvation, having at last, thro' the Blessing of God, with great Comfort and Satisfaction, settled my Mind in Ease upon the Principles of which I have hitherto been giving an Account; about Twenty Years ago I ventured to publish to the World a brief and plain Account of the Success I had met with in my Search after True Religion, &c.* After this his Lordship proceeds to recommend the Reading of Two Treatises he had wrote pursuant to these Principles; and desires his Reader to examine all that he had deliver'd by the Rule of his *Own Reason*, and that of the Holy Scriptures. Yes, there is the great Drift of the whole Treatise, that even

even an *Illiterate* Person and of *Mean* Capacity, shall depend intirely upon the Rule of his *Own* Reason and *Scripture*, for full Satisfaction in all Things which concern his Everlasting Salvation. The Mention of *Reason* and *Scripture* is fair and plausible, and would do better in any Treatise which had not a Tendency to lessen Mens Regard and Deference to the Decisions and Determinations of any Church whatsoever. Tho' it may cost him some *Anxious* and *Disquieting* Thoughts, yet I beseech his Lordship to take a Serious and Impartial Review of those *Troubful* Notions, not to say dangerous Mistakes and Errors, upon which he hath founded most of what he hath hitherto published to the World. That *At last in the Time of his Maturer Age, Thro' the Blessing of God, with great Comfort and Satisfaction, he may settle his Mind in Ease upon Sound and Orthodox Principles; quite contrary to Those I have been hitherto giving an Account of; such as are not destructive of all Revealed Religion, and that due Regard and Veneration Men ought to have for the Decisions and Determinations of a pure and uncorrupt Church.*

I have now done with the Remarks which I could have enlarged considerably; but if these prove sufficient for Healing in some Degree the Wounds, which the propagating such Principles have given to *True Religion*; To prevent the dangerous Influence of them upon

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on the Minds of People of a *Moderate* or but *Weak* Capacity; and to work any Sense of them in the Mind of the Author, I have my End.

The Mention of his Grace of *Dublin* in the *Remark* upon the 24, 25, 26. Paragraphs, was not in the least intended by way of Derogation from the Honour of so great a Prelate, as well as so considerable an Author: Whose Book in Particular Entitled, *The Inventions of Men in the Worship of God*, is wrote with such *Strength* and *Clearness*, that nothing but the Want of Reading and Considering it impartially can hinder all our *Dissenters* from being thereby thoroughly Convinced, That there is no room for their being included in any Comprehension with the *Established Church*, but by their renouncing many pernicious Opinions and Practices, directly contrary to the express Word of God.

If it is said that I have no way spared this *Plain Method*, &c. but treated his Lordship of *Rapho's* Principles contained in it, with unre-served Plainness and Freedom. I Answer, that this is what becomes the *Truths* of Religion; and tho' there were a real Ground for this Objection, yet it is better there should be some Mixture of Human *Infirmity* in the Defence of them, than that they should meet with no Defence at all.

As far as I am capable of judging for myself, I can say with Sincerity, that what I have wrote against his Lordship, proceeded
not

not from any Personal Resentment, and is not level'd at *Him*, but at his mistaken *Notions* and *Errors*: Which, if they had been of no *Consequence*, and not propagated industriously thro' two *Nations*, had for me pass'd off without any Remark or Observation. But when they are such as affect the very *Vitals* of True Religion, together with the *Authority* and *Constitution* of a True Church; and spread abroad with Approbation and Applause by such who are true Friends to neither; I esteem'd it a sinful Omission not to undertake an Answer which I saw entirely declined by others, who might have performed it with less Warmth, and greater Strength of Reason. I have however this for my Excuse; that I wrote with a View of Conviction even to his Lordship, and it will prove no small Disappointment, if my Endeavour fails of its desired Effect.

The greatest and best Men have not thought it any Diminution to them to make a solemn and express *Revocation* of those Errors they have, by any Oversight or Mistake in their Judgments, published to the World; and Posterity have reckon'd it their Glory that they did so: Nor should his Lordship esteem the following such Examples any Injury, but rather a new Addition to a Character already established in the World for Piety and Learning.

If Saint *Peter* had not retracted that * *Compliance* of his with the *Jewish* Christians at *Antioch*, and the Countenance he gave the fond and dangerous Error they were in, upon the sharp and publick Reproof of St. *Paul*, The *Abrogation* of the old Law, and *Salvation* by Christ *Alone* had remained a disputed Point to this Day; notwithstanding the zealous Speech he had † before made for the Decision of that great Point in the Council at *Jerusalem*.

And now that I have chanced to mention this Passage of that great Apostle, I think I ought not to drop it here without this farther Improvement; By observing, That the Crime imputed to him was *Convincing* at a groundless Opinion of the weaker Brethren among the *Jewish* Converts, That they ought to keep up to the *Legal* Observances under the *Gospel*, and particularly in the Case of Meats *Forbidden* and *Allowed*. This soft and easy Compliance of his, in a Matter contrary to his own received Opinion and Practice, and established Profession; His suppressing and concealing a great Truth of the Gospel which he should have preached openly without Reserve; His covering over

* Galat. 2. 12.

† That this was *Before* the Reproof given him by St. *Paul* at *Antioch*, learned Men rightly infer from *Barnabas* being joined with him in carrying the Decrees of that Council to *Antioch*, and its being the last time of their meeting there together.

and palliating a dangerous and pernicious Error, giving it an Air and Colour of *Truth* by Silence, and yielding, and Condescension; when he should rather have laid it open to the full, stripped it of all Disguise, and placed it before their Eyes in the clearest Light; and fortify'd the juster Sentiments of his own Mind by a resolute and steady Adherence to what he himself professed; This I say is what St. Paul withstood him to the Face for, because he was to be *Blamed*; this is what he calls *Dissimulation*; a *Walking not uprightly*, nor *According to the Truth of the Gospel*. The Words are of a much harsher Sound in the Original, Gal. 2. 11. &c. καταναγκάζειν ὅτι he was to be *Condemned*; συνυποκρίθηναι they plaid the *Hypocrite* along with him; and even *Barnabas* was carryed away τῇ ὑποκρίσει with their *Hypocrisy*. And in Vers. the 14th ἐπιδεδυμένοι is opposed to *Wavering* or *Halting* between two Opinions; and accordingly in this Vers. St. Paul closely argues him from thence to be utterly *Inconsistent* with himself.

I am not willing to make any other *Application* of this, than to observe, that St. Peter had as much to plead for himself as any of those who in the succeeding Ages of the Church have fallen into the like *Dissimulation*, as I may now call it. Namely, That he did it all with a good Intent, and for the *Advantage* of true Religion in the main; With Design only to *Insinuate* himself into the good Opinion of
Weaker

Weaker Brethren, that he might the better gain them for *Profelytes*. That he might win upon them with *Lenity* and *Forbearance*; That he might give no *Offence* to *Babes* in *Christ*. The *Sore Part* of *Tender Consciences* is to be touch-ed with great *Caution*, and so *Insensibly* that they may be sure not to feel you; they must be cured by *Opiates*, and lulling them asleep, that they may recover as it were out of a *Slumber*: But if you handle them ruffly, and with undisguised Plainness, and offer to search their Sin to the bottom, they *Wince* and *Recoil* from you, and hug their *Distemper*. No doubt but that he resolved to undeceive those *Jews* some time or other, and only waited for a *Juncture* more *Seasonable*, and a more convenient Opportunity to preach the Truth with Boldness. And yet after all, that which carried the Appearance of *Gentleness* and *Charity*, and of a *Cautious* and *Prudent* Conduct, had no other Effect in the End but the hardning and confirming the *Jewish* Converts in an Opinion *Fatal* to *Themselves*, and to the *Church*; and giving great *Offence* and *Scandal* to the *Gentile* Christians, who were truly *Orthodox*. And this was by *St. Paul* said to be the Result of his *Fear* of those *Of the Circumcision*, Missionaries from *Jerusalem* then present at *Antioch*, who if he had not warped but stuck to his Principle, might have reported it to his Disadvantage at their Return.

Surely this Lesson is to be learned from hence, That no *Dissembling* of the Truths
of

of the Gofple or *Disguifing* of Error, can at any time be a real Service to Religion or the Souls of Men ; But hath ever proved of dangerous and pernicious Confequence to both. All the Principles of Moral or Revealed Religion come from God, and are at all times to be owned and declared with a refolute Simplicity, and undesigning Freedom ; and then to be efpoufed with greateft Zeal when they are leaft in Vogue or Fashion : Nor can there be any Season for palliating falfe and erroneous Principles or Practices ; for any Mitigation of their Guilt and touching them with Tendernefs, when once they are made publick and openly abetted. This remarkable Intercourfe of thofe two great Apoftles, feems to be on Record for no Purpofe of greater Importance than this : Namely, To leave it as a fixed and ftanding Maxim upon the Minds of all their Succeffors, that no Zeal for God ; No good Intention ; No Prudential Confiderations *Arifing from* the faireft Proſpect of Advantage to Church and State, or from diverting impending Ruin, and the greateft Miſchiefs and Inconveniencies which threaten them ; No nor any Pretence of Charity to the Souls of Men, or to avoid giving Offence and Scandal to weak and tender Conſciences, can hinder the acting as *St. Peter* did from paſſing in the Language of *St. Paul* for Prevarication and Hypocriſy ; and from rendring Men truly Orthodox in all other Reſpects a Contradiction to themſelves.

This

This same mistaken *Opinion* and *Practice*, which gave Occasion of so sharp a Contention between those two great Apostles, and which if persisted in and adhered to, had sap-
 ped the very Foundation of the Gospel, and transmitted down the great *Power* and *Privi-
 ledge* of it, but in a ruinous and tottering Condition, hath always had the like 'malignant Influence wherever it hath been found in any of their *Successors* : Insomuch that it hath proved the Cause of most of those Calamities which have befallen the Church in every Age. And it must be Matter of Grief to any truly Christian Heart, that our own Times should furnish us with so many Instances of *Great* and *Good* Men, of tryed and known *Abilities*, of uncommon *Reach* of Understanding, and of undoubted *Sincerity* in all other Respects, who should however deserve to be *Withstood to the Face* in this one Point; and be truly blameable, in that like *Barnabas* they are carried away with this kind of *Dissimulation*; the Effect and Consequence of which is, that what is called downright *Prevarication* or *Hypocrisy* in the Language of Scripture, hath too generally obtain'd the Name of *Moderation* in our Modern Style : So dangerous, says a Commentator on this Passage, *Are the Warpings of Eminent Teachers, that their Examples draw others into their Mistakes, even by a sort of Compulsion.*

St. Peter's Fault was not a charitable bearing with the Infirmities of weaker Brethren; but such a Connivance at, and Condescension

to their Erroneous Opinion as he *Mistook* for it; and was in Truth and Reality no other but an indirect Approbation of it, and an Encouragement to their obstinate Perseverance therein. And now that I am carry'd on thus far, I know not how, into this Case of great Importance to the Church, I must decoy my Reader on a little farther, till I state it in as few Words as possible. The Distinction of Meats *Offer'd*, or *Not Offer'd* to Idols, on the side of the *Gentiles*; and the Differences of Meats *legally Clean or Unclean* and even Circumcision itself on the Part of the *Jews*, in Compliance and Condescension to the Prejudices and Prepossession of New Converts, were by the Church some time after the first Publication of the Gospel, left as Things *Indifferent*. And this very Apostle *St. Paul*, at the same time that he openly declares the Liberty we have in Christ, and our entire *Exemption* and *Freedom* from all such Observances, of either *Jews* or *Gentiles*, by the Gospel, instructs those who are *Weak* not to censure the *Strong* who understood their christian Liberty; and passionately exhorts the *Strong* to bear with the Ignorance and Prejudice of such as were sincere in their Profession of Christianity, but as yet retain'd such Prejudices and Scruples as would in time wear off. And the Argument he uses to prevail on them is, lest by insisting rigorously upon what the Church for prudential Reasons dispensed with, their weak Brethren might

might be drawn before Conviction to act against their Judgment or Opinion; or else be driven off from a Profession of the Gospel. This charitable Condescension, which he recommends towards sincere but weak Consciences, St. Paul encourages in his own Person by Circumcising **Timothy* in Order to reconcile him to the *Jews*, because it was left by the Church as a Thing indifferent, whether a Convert was *Circumcised* or not. But the Opinion of the *Necessity* of Circumcision in Order to Salvation, was not a thing indifferent, but directly contrary to the Truth of the Gospel; and therefore when the same Apostle found it contested for upon that Foot in the Council of *Jerusalem*, he resolutely opposed the Circumcising of †*Titus*; and called them *False Brethren* who insisted upon it, and says that they came in *Privily* to *spy out that Liberty which we have in Christ Jesus*: And adds, that the Reason of this Proceeding of his was, *That the Truth of the Gospel might continue with them*. Now it was the Confirmation of the *Jewish* Converts in this Error, by his Connivance and Condescension, which he reprehended so severely in his Fellow Apostle.

Let those mistaken Judgments who give this very thing the Name of *Meekness*, and *Charity*, and *Moderation* apply this whole

* Acts 16. 3-

† Gal. 2. 4, 5.

Passage to the Case of our *Dissenters*; who, in their Controversy with the Established Church, are content to allow *Us* to be the *Strong*, and take to *Themselves* the Character of *Weak Brethren*, and *Tender Consciences*. Let those mistaken Persons suppose that the Church should Indulge *Dissenters* in dispensing with those **Two* or *Three* Things only in her Ritual which are *Purely Ceremonial*, as the *Cross* in Baptism, and the *Ring* in Marriage, (for I do not reckon *Kneeling* in the most solemn Act of Divine Worship in that Number) which being Ordained and Appointed by the Governours of the Church, and that by a delegated Power from Christ, do from that time cease to be indifferent, and bind the Consciences of Men; and therefore come not within the Case of bearing with the Weak, as it is plainly stated in Scripture.

But suppose the Church should break in upon the Constitution, and unravel it by leaving these Things Out, in a vain Prospect of taking *Dissenters* in; would this be Obedience to the Rule of *Bearing* with the Weak? Or would it be a *Confirming* them in a false Opinion, contrary to the Truth of the Gospel; namely, That the Governours of the Church can never appoint any Rite or Ceremony for the Worship of God, without giving *Scandal* to weak Brethren; without

* See Dr. *Nicholls's* Notes upon the Word *Ceremonies*, in his Book upon the *Common-Prayer*.

transgressing *Plain* Scripture, and without manifest *Violation* of their own Consciences? Can any thing be of more fatal Consequence to the Church? Doth it not destroy its Power all at once; and even dissolve that Body incorporated by Christ?

If that grand *Delusion*, which carries the outside only and *Face* of *Moderation* and *Charity* towards weak Brethren, reached even no farther than this, yet it deserved that open Rebuke which St. *Peter* met with. But alas! the *Disimulation* lies much deeper, and is in *Reality* no other than a fair *Disguise* to the World, for such *Dangerous* Errors as reach to the very *Heart* and *Vitals* of Religion. By this they countenance and encourage many Things directly and expressly opposite to the *Truth* of the *Gosple*, and to their own Judgment and Profession. Such as the horrid Sin of *Schism*, and rending the *Unity* of the *Catholick Church*, by a causeless Separation from a pure and uncorrupt Part of it. Renouncing *Episcopacy* and all *Succeſſion* from the Apostles; and substituting *Lay Elderſhip* in the Place of it, that uncouth *Barbarism*, foreign to the *Gosple* or common Sense, and a flat *Contradiction* in the Terms. Setting up the Decrees of a *Synod* above all *Kingly Power*, even in Matters not of a *Jurisdiction* purely *Spiritual*. A presumptuous Dependance upon the miraculous Gift of the Holy Ghost for *Extempore Prayer* and *Preaching* in the Dissenting Clergy, and insinuating a Perswasion into

into their People, that they have an immediate Revelation from God; which they can't but know they fallſly aſſume to themſelves. *Judging and Condemning* with the ſevereſt Cenfures, thoſe whom (to inſinuate guilty of giving Scandal) they put in the place of the *Strong*. *Inceſſant Railing* at the Church; *Reviling* its Governours; *Expoſing* its *Liturgy*, *Articles* and *Homilies*; *Loading* its whole *Doctrine* and *Discipline* with all the *Calumny* that a malicious Zeal can ſuggeſt; together with conſtant, unwearied Endeavours for ſubverting and deſtroying its whole Conſtitution and Eſta- bliſhment.

Theſe and many other Erroneous Principles and Practices expreſſly contrary to the Word of God; which you may find in his Grace of Dublin's *Inventions of Men in the Worſhip of God*; or in Dr. Hammond's *View of the new Directory*. Theſe I ſay, and many other things of the ſame Nature, are in Truth and Reality what your Men of a Character for *Gentleneſs* and *Moderation*, induſtriouſly cover over with a *Veil*, and in a great Degree hide the *Deformity* and *Sinfulneſs* of them from the Eyes of the World. By their *Connivance* and *Condeſcentions*, the groſſeſt Errors of Perſons who renounce all *Brotherhood* with them, take the ſoft and plauſible Turn of *Infirmities* only of *Weaker Brethren*: Whereas they are ſuch as wound the Soul, and waſte the Conſcience; and are to be cured only by laying them open to the cleareſt View, and ſearching them to the bottom. This

This kind of *Disimulation* lies very deep, and is render'd the more dangerous because of that Semblance it carries of *Caution*, and *Prudence*, and *Charity*, and *Love* of Souls: And therefore where it once gets Possession of the Bishops and Governours of the Church, it becomes a strong *Delusion* to the People under their Care, who, as *St. Paul* speaks on this Occasion, are *Carried away* into the same Error, and even *Compell'd* by their Example. The lamentable Experience of our own Times hath shewn us, that it never doth Good, but always a great deal of Mischiefe. The Effects and Consequences of it, when once it prevails, are the *Strengthening* and *Confirming Dissenters* in those dangerous and deadly *Errors* they are in; Perpetuating their *Schism*; Condemning the *Church*; Administring Colour and Pretence for all the *Calumnies* and *Reproaches* of its Enemies, and giving *Offence* and *Scandal* to the conforming Orthodox Members of it; Exposing its *Doctrine*; Weakening its *Discipline*; Raising a *Coolness* and *Indifference* in the *Hearts* of many, and Extinguishing the *Zeal* they ought to have for that *Communion* in which they hope for *Salvation*. In short, no less than *Shaking* the present Establishment; *Dissolving* our happy Constitution; *Destroying* the *Peace* of Church and State; and *Sowing* the *Seeds of Discord* for our own, and future Generations. Nay, so remarkable and apparent are the many dreadful Effects of this

mistaken

mistaken Principle of *Moderation* and *Charity* towards those whom, by a common *Solicism* and strange Abuse of the Word, many among us love to Style weak Brethren and tender Consciences; That he must be under a mighty Prejudice who doth not see, how this very *Affectation* hath proved the direct and immediate Cause of all the Miseries and Distractions, Intestine Wars and Commotions which these Nations have groaned under since the Reformation; insomuch that the Men who run into it, are themselves chargeable with those very Calamities which they from their Hearts do sadly lament and bewail.

The Reason for this Charge is as obvious as can be assigned for any thing of that Nature; namely, because by Mens opposing and obstructing all sufficient *Legal Securities* for the Church, and constant Endeavours for the *Indulgence* of *Dissenters*, I do not mean in the *Exercise* of their several *Religions*, but in a Share of the *Civil Government*, they dissolve that strict Union there is between *Church* and *State*; which are now so incorporated, that they are to one another as *Soul* and *Body*, and *One* must necessarily feel what the *Other* suffers: Our *Civil* and *Religious* Establishment must be mutually affected with each others Misfortunes, so as both to remain either *Healthy* and *Vigorous*, or in a *Declining* and *Languishing* Condition. Every Instance these Men go into for the weakening of the *Church*, they wound the *State*; every

every Step they move that way, they tend so much farther towards a *Separation* of what will stand or fall together; and that is nothing less than *Political Death* to the whole Constitution. The establishing of one Religion in a Government, tho' a false one, beyond the Reach of any other, and putting it past all Struggle and Contention for the Civil Sway, hath ever been found the one great *Expedient* for a lasting and secure Peace and Quietness in all other Nations; and how the Preachers and Professors of the *True Religion* can answer to God and their own Consciences, the constant Opposition they give to the like Establishment of their own, is hard to tell; unless they are of Opinion that the *Truths* of the Gosple must ever stand or fall by their own intrinsic Force and Evidence, and be left void of all Civil Sanction. How so grand a Delusion as this should prevail and be carried on from one Age to another, and exert its self with greatest Warmth whenever there is a Concurrence of other *Incidents* to prepare the way, and render it most dangerous and fatal, is the more to be wonder'd at; because if Men will lay aside the *Strictest Obligation* of Religion to make room for *Human Policy*, this is an obvious and even fundamental Maxim of it; That the less *Prospect* our *Dissenters* have of Places of Honour and Profit, and of any *Share* in the Civil Administration, the more Converts will be daily made from them. Insomuch that this is the only

only effectual Method of leaving that *Schism* gradually to waste and die away; which will be always cherished and supported by Favour and Countenance; and on the other hand will become more obstinate and incurable from that Spirit of Opposition which is the constant Companion of Error, whenever it is to be suppressed by *Violence and Severity*.

I have pursued this *Case* of bearing with *Weak Brethren* so much farther than I design'd, because it is generally misunderstood; and the *Misapplication* of it hath drawn away Multitudes into a dangerous Sin, which hath put on the Likeness of a *Virtue*, or even of an Evangelical Grace. I must confess it was my Observation of the *Scope and Tendency* of almost every thing published by his Lordship of *Rapho* towards this *Popular Error*, which led me into this *Digression*, if it is really such; and if I have hereby given his Lordship, and others of his *Sacred Order*, Occasion of thinking seriously upon this Subject, and forming a fixed and deliberate Judgment upon a Matter of so great Importance to our whole Constitution and the Souls of Men, I shall not think my Labour lost, on which Side soever they determine.

I beseech his Lordship to observe his own avowed Principle of not *Bringing himself to Assent to, or Dissent from any thing, because this or that Man said it*; and accordingly not to make any Enquiry after the Author of this short Treatise, I shall inform him as much as
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is convenient for him to know of him, namely, That he is one who is not forgetful of his Lordship in his Prayers; and most earnestly intreats, that he would join with him in this Petition to Almighty God, That He would lay Each of us open to our *Selves*; That he would give us a timely Conviction of those *Mistakes* and *Errors* we cannot defend; and *Humility* to acknowledge those *Truths* before which we are not able to *Stand*. That He would reconcile us in Love to one another in this World; But that if any Remains of unconquer'd Passion or Infirmary shall deprive us of the Exercise of our Christian Charity in this Instance, we may however, thro' the Mercy of God, come hereafter to Greet one another in that Place, where it will be the greatest Enhancement of our Happiness, that our Hearts will be visible to one another, and our Conversation shall not have the least Interruption from groundless Suspicion and Jealousies.

F I N I S.

E R R A T A.

Page 18. for *Nicity* read *Nicety*.

Page 34. for *Coutched* read *Conched*.

Advertisement.

THis *Plain Method*, &c. was published by his Lordship since he was Bishop in London.